



### New Grants Support a Spectrum of Student Success Initiatives

Ascendium's board of directors has approved nearly \$4 million in funding for new initiatives. This round of grants supports work on several interventions and research projects including:

- Support for the **College and Community Fellowship** to increase its capacity to provide in-depth technical assistance to organizations implementing evidence-based success strategies for learners transitioning from in-prison programs to traditional campuses.
- Work at the **Lab for Economic Opportunities at the University of Notre Dame** to cultivate a shared understanding of the research on student advising and counseling at six rigorously evaluated programs, including CUNY's landmark Accelerated Study in Associate Programs (ASAP), and to develop policy recommendations on how to build and apply this evidence base to improve outcomes more widely.
- A formal analysis by **Next Gen Sector Partnerships**, an initiative of the **Institute for Networked Communities**, that will inform the development of training materials and a benchmarking framework for aligning education, workforce and economic development with the needs of regional economies.
- A **UNCF** initiative aimed at increasing student success outcomes at a cohort of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), building these institutions' capacity to serve low-income students effectively.

We're excited that these grants will create opportunities to learn more about what it takes to help learners from low-income backgrounds realize their academic and career aspirations in a variety of settings.

### Meet Jim Fox, Ascendium's New Director of Strategic Communications

Ascendium is pleased to welcome Jim Fox to the Education Philanthropy team. Jim is a returning native Wisconsinite with an academic background in journalism. He's had a varied, cross-country career working as a television journalist in Wisconsin and California, a press secretary on Washington, DC's Capitol Hill and spokesperson for the American Medical Association. Jim then spent more than a decade in New York working in healthcare, legal and academic PR, notably as communications director for Columbia Law School.

Over the last few years, Jim went back to school to become a career and executive coach. While pursuing his certification, he wrote the popular political weekly television show "Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien."



"The really cool thing about this role is that the job description specified coaching along with communications, so both my historical and my recently developed skills are prized here," Jim said.



## ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

### ASU Local: Creating a New Model of College Success

Last spring we awarded Arizona State University a \$1.5 million grant to test a model for providing underserved young adults in Los Angeles with a clear and affordable path to a bachelor's degree. This groundbreaking initiative, known as ASU Local, recently **released a four-minute video** telling its story from the perspective of the students and community leaders.

ASU Local works by combining the scalability of a partially online learning environment with local supports to ensure the success of its participants, many of whom are first generation college students. The program features additional supports, like coaches who work with the students around challenges and skills in both college and life, which help create a sense of community and redefine the college experience. In-person classes are held inside a co-working space, meaning students are surrounded by and interacting with professionals every day, gaining a firsthand view of life in a real-world workplace. Visits to local businesses also allow students to go "behind the scenes" with staff (often ASU alumni), observe decisions being made and sit in on major presentations.

We look forward to hearing more about this innovative model for college and workplace success!

### On the Go: Find Ascendium Staff in the Field

#### JFF Postsecondary State Network Meeting

January 29–30, Seattle, WA

#### National Skills Coalition Summit

February 3-5, Washington, DC

#### American Association of State Colleges and Universities: 2020 Academic Affairs Winter Meeting

February 6-8, New Orleans, LA

#### Achieving the Dream: DREAM 2020 National Convening\*

February 18-21, National Harbor, MD

#### Wisconsin School Counselor Association 55th Annual Conference\*

February 18-20, Madison, WI

#### SSTF Learning Network Convening

March 2-4, Miami, FL

#### SXSW EDU 2020

March 9-12, Austin, TX

#### PEAK Grantmaking 2020

March 9-11, Seattle, WA

#### American Association of Community Colleges Annual Convention

March 28-30, National Harbor, MD

#### Arizona State University and Global Silicon Valley Summit\*

March 30-April 1, San Diego, CA

\*In addition to Ascendium staff being on hand, we're helping practitioners attend through the Ascendium Fellows program.